DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 057 RC 017 047

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TITLE Geographical Immobility among African-Americans in the Rural South.
PUB DATE Feb 89
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Savannah, GA, February 22-25, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Attitudes; Black Education; *Black Employment; Blacks; Mail Surveys; *Migration; *Occupational Aspiration; *Occupational Mobility; Rural Areas; Rural Population; Rural to Urban Migration
IDENTIFIERS Tennessee; *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

An important consideration in relating educational attainment to occupational achievement and income returns is geographical immobility. It is necessary to try to understand why African-Americans originally from the rural South exhibit a disposition toward geographical immobility even when aware of the economic gains and residential satisfaction that may accompany geographical mobility. One contention of a study conducted in selected rural counties of west Tennessee is that geographical immobility among African-Americans living in the rural South is indicative of passivity. The 237 subjects surveyed in this study were African-Americans having some years of post-secondary education but not having participated in any form of geographical mobility outside of the rural South. A questionnaire was designed to elicit respondents' positions on two main issues: (1) if they would consider geographical mobility if it meant advancement in their career plans (GEOGM); and (2) how they assessed the correlation of their present occupational positions and the plans they had for themselves personally (WORLIFE). Additional questions were asked to give support to the GEOGM and WORLIFE variables. The results of the study indicate that those respondents who express some dissatisfaction with their present occupational position, but who still hesitate to consider geographical mobility, have resided in the same location for a longer period of time, are not particularly involved in community activities, and do not believe their communities offer them prospects of advancement. This paper contains 49 references. (Author/ALL)

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GEOGRAPHICAL IMMOBILITY AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE RURAL SOUTH

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GEOGRAPHICAL IMMOBILITY AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE RURAL SOUTH

Abstract

This study hypothesizes that an important consideration in relating educational attainment to occupational achievement and income returns is geographical immobility. It is a preliminary effort aimed at trying to understand why African-Americans who are originally from the rural South exhibit a disposition characterized as geographical immobility even when they are cognizant of the economic gains and residential satisfaction that may accompany geographical mobility.

It is not the intent of this study to conclude that the only way in which African-Americans living in the rural South may maximize their educational attainment in the form of occupational achievement and income returns is through geographical mobility. Rather, the contention of this study is that geographical immobility among African-Americans who live in the rural South is largely indicative of a passivity which results in minimal contributions made by such persons either to their immediate geographical environment or the nation as a whole.

The empirical data of this study is limited only to those African-Americans who are from selected rural counties in West Tennessee and who have had some years of post-secondary education and have not participated in any form of geographical mobility outside of the rural South.

GEOGRAPHICAL IMMOBILITY AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE RURAL SOUTH

Introduction

The recent projections regarding national population trends towards the year 2000 indicate that well over one-third of the nation will be comprised largely of minorities. At the same time, statistics reflect a downward trend in high school graduation rates for minorities, a factor which has far-reaching effects for the national economy, educational institutions, etc. In a recent report entitled "One-Third of a Nation", the implications of a burgeoning minority population is aptly stated:

> The future of the United States in the gobal arena is at stake as well. The growing presence of minorities in the nation's work force and the contributions they will make will affect not only our domestic economy but also our international competitiveness. However, more than economic standing is in question; the credibility of democracy as a vehicle for advancing the hopes and dreams of millions of people in less developed nations depends on our performance (American Council on Education and Education Commission of the States, 1988: 18).

The outlook for the future seems fairly grim when one looks at the data on employment and earnings for minorities. The 1988 Statistical Abstract of the United States reported that in 1986, compared to whites, there were three times as many African-

Americans who were below the poverty level (435), and by the end of the first quarter of 1988, unemployment rates for African-Americans tripled that of Whites (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988: 39). In the area of educational achievement, the statistics mirror those regarding occupational and income levels; the number of Whites who have successfully completed in excess of four years of college double those of African-Americans (Statistical Abstract of the United States: 125; U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 1988: 12,41; American Council on Education, 1987: 20-21). The dismal statistical evidence concerning the educational achievements of African-Americans is crucial given the pivotal importance of education, particularly higher education, in the day-to-day operation in the United States.

> ....For more than a generation, a college education has been a key part of the American dream--and, for many individuals and families, a good measurement of progress towards its fulfillment. Statistics on incomes and living standards support the belief that college is the passport to greater opportunity and achievement (American Council on Education and Education Commission of the States, 1988: 13).

There has, in fact, been some evidence that support 'the belief that college is the passport to greater opportunity and achievement' especially, as Farley reported, in the increasing administrative and professional positions occupied by African-

Americans (1987). However, Farley recognizes that this relationship is not the same for African-Americans everywhere and is particularly not so for those who have chosen to take up residence in the southern parts of the United States (1987: 225).

This study hypothesizes that an important consideration in relating educational attainment to occupational achievement and income returns is geographical immobility. It is not the intent of this study to conclude that the only way in which African-Americans living in the rural South may maximize their educational attainment is through geogrpahical mobility. In fact, I am fully aware of the problems created by geographical mobility, of which the "brain-drain" is the most representative. This study is a preliminary effort aimed at trying to understand why African-Americans who are originally from the rural South and who have some years of higher education opt to return to those areas even when they are cognizant of the economic gains and residential satisfaction that may accompany geographical mobility. This study contends that geographical immobility among African-Americans who live in the rural South is largely reflective of a passivity which innibits their contribution to their immediate society and has implications for meaningful minority participation in the wider society. This study uses W.A.V. Clark's conception of migration in its discussion of mobility, i.e., "... a relocation...that is too far to continue commuting to the same job under normal circumstances" (1986:12).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Mobility

The literature on mobility studies is extremely extensive. Ravenstein's contributions (1885; 1889) to the literature perhaps represent the earliest works on the subject. His "laws" on migration influenced the works of several scholars particularly Young (1924); Zipf (1946); Niedercorn and Bechdolt (1969); Wilson (1970); Yould (1971); and Clark and Avery (1976) who contributed in one form or the other to what became known as the 'gravity models of migration'.

However, the 'human capital model' became one of the earliest model and the one most referred to. Hicks perhaps crudely laid the basis for this model when he suggested that the variation in wage differentials in various geographical areas (1932:76) was the most influential factor in migration. Sjaastad (1962) formulated the first theoretical 'human capital model' or 'cost-benefit model' which built on Hicks' position. Sjaastad's work, which was later complemented by Lee (1966), contended that migration is viewed in terms of investments and, consequently, the benefits are viewed from both a long-term perspective and the benefits (over and above economic benefits) that could be accrued from moving.

The 'social demography tradition', as represented primarily by Goldstein (1958); Blumen, Kogan, and McCarthy (1955); McGinnis, (1968); Myers, McGinnis, and Masnick (1967); Swanson, Luloff, and Warlands (1979); Butler, (1970); and Morrison (1972), brought several specific variables to bear on the

question of mobility, viz., the anticipated place of migration, the forces that cause the person to consider migration, and characteristics of the would-be migrant, to list a few. An essential component of this theory was the categorization of persons who anticipated moving into two distinct groups, viz., 'movers', and 'stayers'.

There is another group of influential scholars who contributed to the school of 'social demography', chief among whom are Rossi (1955); Leslie and Richardson (1961); Sabagh, Van Arsdol, and Butler (1969); Brown and Munroe (1970); Golant (1970); and Speare (1974). The position of this school is perhaps best represented in the 'Residential Satisfaction Model' proposed by Speare. According to Speare, there are two considerations which may deter migration (1974:175). First, there is the development of a bond between persons and their location which may include other individuals, homes, jobs, organizations, etc. Secondly, there is the consideration of dissatisfaction, and even though the "dissatisfaction is a necessary condition for the consideration of mobility, it is not a sufficient condition....[since such] sources of dissatisfaction can be alleviated by adjustments in local conditions", (ibid.: 175).

The literature that deals specifically with African-Americans and migration are not as many. Peter Uhlenberg in an article entitled 'Noneconomic Determinants of Nonmigration: Sociological Considerations for Migration Theory', contended that the pattern of African-American migration to the North from the

south, may best be "...explained by examining information level about opportunities and such variables as assimilation potential and dependence upon local communities than by calculating objective differences in opportunities between the South and North" (1973: 306). This collaborates very much with the observations made by Taeuber and Taeuber (1965); Kennedy (1930); and Scott (1920). Ritchey (1976; 1975), suggests that the migration patterns among African-Americans vis-a-vis White Americans may be explained with reference to educational attainment. Supporting Bogue's (1969) and Taeuber and Taeuber's (1965) positions, Ritchey reasoned that since low levels of educational attainment account for a decrease in migration, and "., [African-Americans] are disproportionately concentrated in lower educational rankings...[then there are] relatively lower rates of migration among [African-Americans]" (1976: 393). Several other studies, particularly Long and Hansen (1973); Tarver and McCleod (1976); Johnson and Campbell (1981); Falk (1982); and Kuvlesky, et.al. (1982), have concluded that not only African-Americans are more unlikely to migrate but that they are unlikely to migrate long distances.

The range of literature, then, suggests that there are several probable causes for migration. First, that mobility is viewed in terms of investments, and consequently, the benefits are viewed from both a long-term perspective and the benefits (over and above economic benefits) that could be accrued from moving. Secondly, the lack of strong bonds with other indiv-

iduals, homes, jobs, organizations, etc., may induce the wish to move. Thirdly, the feeling that one may not be able to alleviate dissatisfactions in a particular environment may cause one to consider moving. Finally, with specific reference to African-Americans, higher educational rankings together with more information about other geographical areas and assimilation difficulties experienced in local communities are seen as probable causes of mobility.

Data

In the summer of 1988, several African-American churches, local NAACP chapters, local black graduate fraternity and sorority chapters, and local institutions of higher learning in seven rural counties in West Tennessee (Chester, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Haywood, and Madison) were contacted for assistance in this study. As a result of their assistance, I compiled a directory of African-Americans who had attended institutions of higher learning in excess of one year, who were gainfully employed, and who could be used as sources of contact for persons of similar ilk. A total of 621 names were compiled with addresses and telephone numbers. All persons were contacted preliminarily by telephone after which a mailed questionnaire was sent to each one. Some cases required personal interviews and in such cases, African-American students trained in conducting interviews together with the principal investigator conducted the interviews. Such students were deliberately selected primarily because of the nature of the study and research findings which

address the issue of the effects of the race of the interviewer on possible outcomes (Hyman, et.al., 1954; Pettigrew, 1964; Schuman and Converse, 1971; Sudman and Bradburn, 1974; Schaeffer, 1970). All efforts combined, yielded 237 respondents.

Every effort was made to exclude from the study persons who were only a temporary stay in the named counties. Secondly, whenever there were more than one person in a particular household that filed the criteria listed below, only one was interviewed. The criteria were listed as follows: (1) race; (2) residence; (3) employment; and (4) education.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit respondents' position on two main issues, inter alia, First, they were asked about their position on considering geographical mobility if this could mean advancement in their career plans (GEOGM). Second, they were asked to consider the correlation of their present occupational position and the plans they had for themselves personally (WORLIFE). The responses which were in four categories, viz., "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", and "strongly agree", were later recoded to include only those who "strongly disagreed" and "strongly agreed". With respect to the GEOGM variable, 19.4 percent "strongly disagreed" while 32.5 percent "strongly agreed" that a change of job and geographical local was necessary in an effort to advance their career. With respect to the WORLIFE variable, 26.3 percent "strongly disagreed" while 23.6 "strongly agreed" that their present career position correlated satisfactorily with their long-range plans in

life. A two-by-two table (see Figure 1) was then constructed and used in determining the respondents' support for their position on both the GEOGM and WORLIFE variables.

Support for the GEOGM variable was measured by the respondents' position on their thoughts on moving (MOVT) and the intensity of emotions connected with those thoughts (MOVEM). Support for the WORLIFE variable came from responses to a plethora of questions. First, respondents were asked about their rating of their county as a place to live (RATE) and their willingness to recommend their town to anyone considering a geographical move (RECTOF). Secondly, they were asked about their satisfaction with aspects of their town, viz., employmeny opportunities (EMPO); public schools (PUBS); race relations (RACE); entertainment and cultural activities (ENTECA); participation in community control (LEADU); willingness of community to change particular ways of doing things (CHANGE); extent to which they perceive change can be brought about (NECH); the impact of external forces on the community (OUTFC); the community's resistance to change (RESCA); and the flexibility of determining one's lifestyle in the community (DETLIF). Thirdly, respondents were aske about their involvement in various community activities including church (CHURIN); recreation (RECIN); school (SCHOLIN); and political organiations (POLIN). To further consider both the GEOGM and WORLIFE variables, respondents were requested to give their age (AGE); income levels (INGROP); length of residence in the same location (RESLO);

FIGURE 1: Relationsnip of Satisfaction With Life and Career Plans and Recognition of Need to Advance Career Plans.

		WORLIFE	
GEOGM		STRONGLY DISSATISFIED	STRONGLY SATISFIED
Do Not Recognize the Need to Move		A N=24	B N=22
Recognize the Need to Move		C N=43	D N=34

number of relatives living in the same town (RELST); and the intensity of their pursuit of another job (CARPL).

Analysis

The research findings of Wolpert (1965), Golant (1971), Speare (1974), and Bach, et.al., (1977), are supported in several areas among those who express some degree of satisfaction with their life and career plans and are in opposition to moving to enhance their career plans. For such persons, there is a strong relationship in the areas of age, income levels, and occupational stability as reflected in length of stay in the same job. That group also lay claims to a greater degree of satisfaction with the employment and entertainment and cultural opportunities available and indicate less hesitancy, if any, in recommending their community to anyone anticipating geographical relocation. However, those who express some dissatisfaction with their present occupational position and are hesitant to consider geographical mobility exhibit some interesting characteristics. In particular, they seemed to have resided in the same location ($\underline{M}$=242) for a longer period of time than those who are satisfied ($\underline{M}$=143) and exhibit a neglible difference in their participation in community activities, particularly in the area of politics. Further, their views on the willingness of the community leaders in requesting advice from its citizens, willingness of the residents in changing the way things are done in the community, the extent to which change can be brought about in the community and the extent to which exogamous factors

TABLE 1: Means, Standard Deviation, and T-values of a Comparison Between Those Who Are Satisfied and Those Who Are Not Satisfied With Their Life and Career Plans and Who Do Not Recognize the Need to Move

Variables	Means		Standard Deviation		T-Values
	A (N=24)	B (N=22)	A (N=24)	B (N=22)	
MOVEM	0.8333	0.8636	0.381	0.351	0.780
MOVT	0.7083	0.4545	0.464	0.510	0.085
EMPO	2.2500	3.0909	1.189	1.269	0.026*
PUBS	3.4583	3.6364	1.250	1.217	0.627
RACE	2.0833	2.6818	0.974	1.171	0.068
ENTECA	2.1667	3.0000	1.129	1.195	0.020*
RECTOF	1.6667	1.9545	0.637	0.213	0.046*
RATE	2.4583	2.9091	0.588	0.526	0.009*
CHURIN	1.0000	0.8182	0.295	0.395	0.087
SCHOLIN	0.2083	0.4545	0.415	0.510	0.081
RECIN	0.2083	0.2727	0.415	0.456	0.620
POLIN	0.1667	0.2273	0.381	0.429	0.616
INGROP	2.3333	3.0455	1.167	1.253	0.053
AGE	381.3333	438.5455	138.246	138.352	0.168
RELST	31.0417	36.4545	36.804	38.385	0.629
CARPL	1.8333	1.3636	0.637	0.658	0.018*
RESLO	241.8333	143.0455	146.195	114.269	0.014*
LEADV	1.3256	1.3824	0.391	0.387	0.502
CHANGE	1.3721	1.2941	0.489	0.462	0.476
NECH	1.3953	1.2941	0.489	0.493	0.909
OUTFO	1.2558	1.3824	0.495	0.493	0.246
RESCA	1.3256	1.3235	0.474	0.475	0.985
DETLIF	1.6047	1.3824	0.495	0.493	0.054

*p> 0.05

affect the community, are not radically different from those who are unwilling to move and are satisfied with their life and career plans. These findings run counter to those in the literature (Wolpert, 1965, 1966; Speare, 1974; and Bach, et.al., 1977). In fact, these findings may be supportive of the position taken in this study, i.e., even though this group of African-Americans have recognized that geographical mobility is essential in the advancement of their career objectives, they are hesitant about moving despite the fact that their communities do not offer them the prospect of advancement nor reasons to believe that they may intervene and cause the necessary conditions to become available.

In Table 2, there are strong relationships among those who are older, indicate an intent to remain in their present occupational position until retirement, and do not see the need to move to advance their career. These findings concur with those in the literature (Wolpert, 1965, 1966; Speare, 1974; and Bach, et.al., 1977). However, a comparison between the two groups with respect to the other variables do not show a negligible difference. These findings do not concur with the general findings in the literature (Speare, 1974; Bach, et.al., 1977) and, more particularly, they do not agree with those findings by Long and Hansen (1973); Tarver and McCleod (1976); Johnson and Campbell (1981); Falk (1982); and Kuvlesky, et.al., (1982), who contend that African-Americans who are more likely to move are younger, have lived for a shorter period of time in the same location, are the

TABLE 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Values of a Comparison Between Those Who Are Satisfied and Those Who Are Not With Their Life and Career Plans and Who Recognize the Need to Move

Variables	Means		Standard Deviation		T-Values
	C (N=43)	D (N=34)	C (N=43)	D (N=34)	
MOVEM	0.6279	0.6765	0.489	0.475	0.661
MOVT	0.7907	0.7059	0.412	0.462	0.405
EMPO	2.6279	2.3235	1.070	1.065	0.218
PUBS	3.6744	3.6176	1.128	1.101	0.825
RACE	2.0930	2.4118	1.231	1.048	0.224
ENTECA	2.4651	2.4118	1.351	1.328	0.863
RECTOF	1.4884	1.6471	0.592	0.485	0.200
RATE	2.4884	2.5588	0.827	0.746	0.696
CHURIN	0.9302	0.7941	0.593	0.410	0.239
SCHOLIN	0.3256	0.4118	0.474	0.500	0.445
RECIN	0.3448	0.2353	0.482	0.431	0.279
POLIN	0.930	0.2647	0.294	0.448	0.059
INGROP	2.0000	2.2059	0.845	0.729	0.255
AGE	316.9302	381.9412	50.346	122.729	0.006*
RELST	19.4884	25.8235	28.061	32.696	0.372
CARPL	2.4186	1.8235	0.626	0.834	0.001*
RESLO	172.0698	197.8824	157.176	161.489	0.483
LEADV	1.3256	1.3824	0.474	0.493	0.612
CHANGE	1.3721	1.2941	0.489	0.462	0.476
NECH	1.3953	1.2941	0.489	0.493	0.909
OUTFO	1.2558	1.3824	0.495	0.493	0.246
RESCA	1.3256	1.3235	0.474	0.475	0.985
DETLIF	1.6047	1.3824	0.495	0.493	0.054

*$p < 0.05$

recipients of a larger income, and have less community involvement. These findings again lend support to the position exposed in this study, i.e., African-Americans who have had some years of higher educational experience and who have opted to live in the rural South may not have done so for the traditional explanations advanced but may in fact be exhibiting a complacency both to migration and the affairs of their community.

The information presented in Table 3 is somewhat problematic. There are strong realtionships among seven variables (MOVEM, MOVT, RECTOF, RATE, INGROP, AGE, and CARPL). Once again, these findings concur with those in the literature. However, with respect to the other variables which were intended to measure satisfaction with various facetsof community life (EMPO, RACE, PUBS, ENTECA, LEADV, CHANGE, NECH, OUTFO, RESCA, and DETLIF) and community involvement (CHURIN, SCHOLIN, RECIN, and POLIN), there are negligible differences between those who are satisfied with their life and career plans and do not wish to move and those who are dissatisfied with their life and career plans and who wish to move. When one notes, particularly, that those who are satisfied with their life and career plans and do not wish to move record very little involvement in church, school, and political activities while conceding that they are rarely asked for advise from community leaders (LEADV) and that to a large extent the ways in which things are done are determined by exogamous forces, then it is plausible to suggest that there is a manifestation of complacency. Additionally, when one

TABLE 3: Means, Standard Deviation, and T-Values of a Comparison Between Those Who Are Satisfied With Their Life and Career Plans and Do Not Wish to Move and Those Who Are Dissatisfied With Their Life and Career Plans and Who Wish to Move

Variables	Means		Standard Deviation		T-Values
	B (N=22)	C (N=43)	B (N=22)	C (N=43)	
MOVEM	0.8636	0.6279	0.351	0.489	0.030*
MOVT	0.4545	0.7907	0.510	0.412	0.011*
EMPO	2.0909	2.6279	1.269	1.070	0.151
PUBS	3.6364	3.6744	1.217	1.128	0.903
RACE	2.6818	2.0930	1.171	1.231	0.066
ENTECA	3.0000	2.4651	1.195	1.351	0.109
RECTOF	1.9545	1.4884	0.213	0.592	0.000*
RATE	2.9091	2.4884	0.526	0.827	0.015*
CHURIN	0.8182	0.9302	0.395	0.593	0.368
SCHOLIN	0.4545	0.3256	0.510	0.474	0.329
RECIN	0.2727	0.3488	0.456	0.482	0.535
POLIN	0.2273	0.0930	0.429	0.294	0.197
INGROP	3.0455	2.0000	1.253	0.845	0.001*
AGE	438.5455	316.9302	138.352	50.346	0.001*
RELST	36.4545	19.4884	38.385	28.061	0.075
CARPL	1.3636	2.4186	0.658	0.626	0.000*
RESLO	143.0455	172.0698	114.269	157.176	0.399
LEADV	1.2727	1.3256	0.456	0.474	0.665
CHANGE	1.2273	1.3721	0.429	0.489	0.226
NECH	1.3636	1.3953	0.492	0.495	0.807
OUTFO	1.0909	1.2558	0.294	0.441	0.078
RESCA	1.1364	1.3256	0.351	0.474	0.075
DETLIF	1.4091	1.6047	0.503	0.495	0.143

* $p<0.05$

notes that despite the position taken (by those who are dissatisfied with their life and career plans and recognize the need to move) particularly with respect to race relations in the community (RACE) and the persistence of exogamous factors in determining the affairs of the community (OUTFO), that group is willing to agree that they can still pretty much determine their own lifestyle (DETLIF), the question of complacency becomes a real issue.

Conclusion

As was stated earlier, this study proposes that an important consideration in relating educational achievement and income returns among African-Americans in the rural South is geographical immobility. However, it does not imply that geographical mobility is the only way in which African-Americans in the rural South may maximize their educational attainment. Rather, it is our contention that geographical immobility among African-Americans in thr rural South is largely reflective of a passivity which inhibits their contribution to their immediate environment and has implications for meaningful minority participation in the wider society particularly in the areas of decreasing the number of persons who are among the working poor; increasing political participation by African-Americans; and the increased presence of African-Americans in the boardrooms, classrooms, and other professional and administrative positions where they may impact on the efforts to create an equalitarian society.

This study does not pretend to present a conclusive discussion on the issue of geographical immobility among African-Americans in the rural South but suggests that the issue is worthy of further investigation if one takes seriously the position espoused by the American Council on Education and Education Commission of the States:

> ....The growing presence of minorities in the nation's workforce and the contributions they will make will affect not only our domestic economy but also our international competiveness. However, more than economic standing is in question; the credibility of democracy as a vehicle for advancing the hopes and dreams of millions of people in less developed nations depends on our performance (1988: 18).

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